<u>IN THE CLAIMS</u>

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and listings.

1. (Currently Amended) A variable-length code decoding apparatus which receives a bitstream of variable-length-encoded image data and outputs symbol data, comprising:

~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> means for ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> a variable-length code word from the received bitstream;

discrimination means for discriminating a type of a code word in accordance with a pattern of a predetermined number of bits at a start of the variable-length code word ~~cued~~ <u>queued</u> by said ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> means;

extraction means for extracting data having a sufficient code word length from a predetermined bit position on the basis of a discrimination result from said discrimination means;

a Huffman table which compares the extracted data with a variable-length code word stored in advance, and when the data and the variable-length code word coincide, outputs first symbol data;

~~addition arithmetic~~ <u>computing</u> means for ~~generating~~ <u>modifying</u>, for the first symbol data output from said Huffman table, ~~a sum value corresponding to~~ the first symbol data and ~~adding the generated sum value to the first symbol to output~~ <u>generating</u> a plurality of types of second symbol data <u>in accordance with the modified first symbol</u>;

decoding means for selecting a predetermined bit lane from the variable-length code word ~~cued~~ <u>queued</u> by said ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> means and outputting the bit lane as third symbol data; and

selection means for selecting and outputting one of the first symbol data output from said Huffman table, the second symbol data generated by said ~~addition arithmetic~~ <u>computing</u> means, and the third symbol data generated by said decoding means, in accordance with a value of the variable-length code word [[cued]] <u>queued</u> by said ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> means.

2. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the symbol data ~~added~~ <u>calculated</u> by said ~~addition arithmetic~~ <u>computing</u> means are RUN and LEVEL.

3. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said discrimination means discriminates whether the code word is an escape code.

4. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the received bitstream is image data encoded by MPEG-4 encoding.

5. (Currently Amended) A variable-length code decoding method which receives a bitstream of variable-length-encoded image data and decodes the bitstream to at least symbol data, comprising:

- 3 -

a ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> step, of ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> a variable-length code

word from the received bitstream;

a discrimination step, of discriminating a type of a code word in

accordance with a pattern of a predetermined number of bits at a start of the variable-length

code word [[cued]] <u>queued</u> in ~~the~~ <u>said</u> ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> step;

an extraction step, of extracting data having a sufficient code word

length from a predetermined bit position on the basis of a discrimination result <u>obtained</u> in

[[the]] <u>said</u> discrimination step;

a Huffman decoding step, of comparing the extracted data with a

variable-length code word stored in advance as a Huffman table, and when the data and the

variable-length code word coincide, outputting first symbol data;

~~an addition arithmetic~~ <u>a computing</u> step, of ~~generating~~ <u>modifying,</u>

for the first symbol data output in [[the]] <u>said</u> Huffman decoding step, ~~a sum value~~

~~corresponding to~~ the first symbol data and ~~adding the generated sum value to the first~~

~~symbol to output~~ <u>generating</u> a plurality of types of second symbol data <u>in accordance with</u>

<u>the modified first symbol</u>;

a decoding step, of selecting a predetermined bit lane from the

variable-length code word [[cued]] <u>queued</u> in [[the]] <u>said</u> ~~cueing~~ <u>queuing</u> step and

outputting the bit lane as third symbol data; and

a selection step, of selecting and outputting one of the first symbol

data output from the Huffman table, the second symbol data generated in ~~the addition~~

~~arithmetic~~ <u>said computing</u> step, and the third symbol data generated in [[the]] <u>said</u>

- 4 -

decoding step, in accordance with a value of the variable-length code word [[cued]] queued

in [[the]] said cueing queuing step.

6. (Currently Amended) A computer program which functions as a

variable-length code decoding apparatus which receives a bitstream of variable-length

encoded image data and outputs symbol data, characterized by functioning as:

cueing queuing means for cueing queuing a variable-length code

word from the received bitstream;

discrimination means for discriminating a type of a code word in

accordance with a pattern of a predetermined number of bits at a start of the variable-length

code word cued by said cueing queuing means;

extraction means for extracting data having a sufficient code word

length from a predetermined bit position on the basis of a discrimination result from said

discrimination means;

a Huffman table which compares the extracted data with a variable-

length code word stored in advance, and when the data and the variable-length code word

coincide, outputs first symbol data;

addition arithmetic computing means for generating modifying, for

the first symbol data output from said Huffman table, a sum value corresponding to the

first symbol data and adding the generated sum value to the first symbol to output

generating a plurality of types of second symbol data in accordance with the modified first

symbol;

decoding means for selecting a predetermined bit lane from the variable-length code word [[cued]] queued by said ~~cueing~~ queuing means and outputting the bit lane as third symbol data; and

selection means for selecting and outputting one of the first symbol data output from said Huffman table, the second symbol data generated by said ~~addition~~ ~~arithmetic~~ computing means, and the third symbol data generated by said decoding means, in accordance with a value of the variable-length code word [[cued]] queued by said ~~cueing~~ queuing means.

7. (Original) A computer-readable storage medium which stores a computer program of claim 6.